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ABSTRACT

A comparison of surveys of Texas State Teachers Association members in 1983, 1991, and 1996 yields information about trends in the average Texas teachers political profile and voting patterns. The profile developed from the 1996 survey of 700 teachers indicated that the average Texas teacher is female (86 percent), in her 40's (36 percent), married (74 percent), and with 20 or more years of experience (36 percent). The average teacher was eligible to vote and did vote in local, state, and national elections, categorized herself as middle-of-the-road, and did not necessarily vote for the candidate endorsed by her professional organization. The survey results also point out major similarities and differences between the average American teacher and the average Texas teacher. Voting patterns of Texas teachers are shown to differ from those of the general population, with 95 percent of these teachers voting compared with 58 percent of the general population. The 1996 survey instrument is included. (ND)

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POLITICAL PROFILE AND VOTING PATTERNS OF TEXAS TEACHERS IN 1996

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ABSTRACT

POLITICAL PROFILE AND VOTING PATTERNS OF TEXAS TEACHERS IN 1996

A comparison of survey results from Texas teachers in 1983, 1991, and 1996 yields information about trends in the average Texas teachers political profile and voting pattern. The survey results also point out major similarities and differences between the average American teacher and the average Texas teacher. Voting patterns of Texas teachers are shown to differ from the general populace.

Political Profile and Voting Patterns of Texas Teachers in 1996

Although the public schools of the nation are a major site of much political activity (Beurbe, 1988; O'Connell, 1991; Lieberman, 1994; Spaulding, 1994; Ginsburg, 1995), a recent survey (see appendix) of the Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA) members indicates that teachers in Texas are relatively inactive with respect to the candidacy of national, state and local figures. Sixty-three percent of the teachers reported that they were inactive in political campaigns. On the other hand, the self-reported voting record showed that 95% of the teachers voted in the 1994 general election and governor's race. This compared favorably with statistics from a National Election Study (NES, 1996) conducted by the University of Michigan and reported on the Internet in which 58% of all respondents from the general populace reported voting in the 1994 elections (see Table 1). Generally, participation rates have been noted to correlate with education level so the participation in voting for teachers would be anticipated to be higher than the general populace. Also, self-reporting tends to inflate such figures.

Table 1
Comparison of Texas Teachers and General Populace

	Texas State Teachers Association Survey	National Election Study
Education	100% Degreed	75% Some College or Degree
Voted '92	95%	75%
Voted '94	95%	58%
Gender	----	----
Male	14%	46%
Female	86%	54%

This 1996 Texas survey was a follow-up study to the original study in 1968 by Darby (1970) and to two more recent surveys intended to track the political profile and voting record of Texas teachers who are members of the Texas State Teachers Association. The more recent studies--one completed in 1983 and one completed in 1991--provided information that was be the basis for making a comparison and noting trends over the last 13 years (see Table 2). A systematic sample of 700 teachers selected by computer from the Texas State Teachers Association membership list of 100,000 teachers yielded a 44% return rate. A current voting profile of these teachers showed that the average Texas teacher is female (86%), in her 40's (36%), married (74%), with 20 or more years teaching experience (36%).

Table 2

Summary of Political Profile for Texas Teachers

Question	Response	1983	1991	1996
Sex	Female	79%	84%	86%
Native Texan	Yes	71%	62%	69%
Born/Reared in District	Yes	18%	20%	14%
Live in District	Yes	64%	66%	61%
Eligible to Vote	Yes	92%	87%	84%
Voted in Board Election	Yes	66%	70%	65%
Voted in General Election	Yes	95%	95%	95%
Delegate to Convention	Yes	7%	17%	10%
Contribute Money	Yes	54%	62%	48%
Contribute to PAC	Yes	48%	32%	20%
Run for Political Office	Yes	2%	3%	4%
Work in Political Campaign	Yes	36%	24%	11%
Contact State Rep. or Senator	Yes	59%	61%	39%
Elected to Political Office	Yes	2%	3%	2%
Normally Vote in Primaries	Yes	86%	90%	84%
Voted for Endorsed Candidates	Yes	76%	59%	46%

Interestingly, the profile of teachers in America also showed a majority being female (73%), with the largest single age group in their 40's (39%) teaching at the elementary school level. The largest American group (30%) had10-20 years of teaching experience (U.S. Department of Education, 1995).

The average Texas teacher was a native Texan but was not born nor reared in the district of employment--although she chose to live there. She had a bachelor's degree, attended a public college, was a member of 1-2 professional organizations, was of European lineage, Protestant, and taught elementary school.

She was eligible to vote and did vote in local, state and national elections, although she was not politically active in any campaign. In 1992, she (55%) voted a split ticket in the November general elections while 22% of the general electorate did the same (NES, 1996). She categorized herself politically as middle-of-the-road and did not necessarily vote for the candidate endorsed by her professional organization. Fifty-four percent of the teachers indicated they did not vote for the endorsed candidate in the last school board election and 73% stated that the endorsement was not a significant factor in the last gubernatorial election.

She contributed less frequently to political campaigns and/or to Political Action Committees (PACs) than in the past and now works less often in a political campaign than in the past (see Table 2). She has not been a delegate to a political convention and has not run for political office.

She believed that Texas should have minimum regulation for home schools, that principals should not be given merit pay based on student performance, and that teachers should not be evaluated on student academic performance.

Table 3
Comparison of TSTA and U.S.A. Teacher

Texas Teachers (TSTA)		American Teacher
Female	86%	73%
Secondary	47%	32%
Elementary	53%	59%
Bachelor's	51%	52%
Master's	47%	42%
Doctorate	2%	0.7%
Experience		
0 - 5 years	16%	0 - 2 years 4%
6 - 10 years	12%	3 - 9 years 26%
11-15 years	20%	10-20 years 35%
16-20 years	16%	20+ years 30%*
20+ years	36%	

*(U.S. Department of Education, 1995)

As might be anticipated, the respondents to this TSTA survey appeared to be somewhat different from the national picture of educators as developed with 1993-94 statistics compiled by the Department of Education (1995) , and also different from the general electorate as noted in the survey conducted by the University of Michigan in the National Election Study (NES, 1996). The voter turnout indicated by this same NES survey was 75% in 1992 and 58% in 1994. As illustrated here, years of gubernatorial elections typically show less voter participation than years of presidential elections. In 1994, seven percent of the general electorate said that they gave money to help a campaign. In contrast, Texas teachers self-reported that 26% contributed to a 1996 political campaign.

A comparison of current results of the 1983 and 1991 surveys with the current survey yields what appears to be some interesting trends.

(1) Numberwise, females continued to dominate the Texas educational scene.

(2) A majority continued to live in the district where they teach, but a large percentage did not do so. This has important election implications for school board and school bond issues.

(3) The percentage of teachers contributing to a PAC has declined substantially. Candidates anticipating strong financial support from teacher organizations may experience some disappointment.

(4) Time and effort donated to work in a political campaign has also declined substantially.

(5) It appears that state representatives and senators have decreased their contact with teachers.

(6) A majority of teachers are not following voting recommendations of professional organizations.

Legislators, teachers, administrators, teacher and administrator organizations should find this information helpful to planning policy, developing law and in conducting elections.

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PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR POLITICAL SURVEY (1996)

Directions: Using a #2 pencil, record your answers on the attached Scantron.

Example: 1. [a] [b] [c] [d] [e] (in this example, b is marked)

1. What is your sex? (a) Male (b) Female
2. What is your age? (a) 20's (b) 30's (c) 40's (d) 50's (e) 60+
3. What is your martial status? (a) Married (b) Single (c) Other
4. How long have you been teaching? (a) 0-5 (b) 6-10 (c) 11-15 (d) 16-20 (e) 20+
5. Are you a native Texan? (a) Yes (b) No
6. Were you born and reared in the school district in which you now teach? (a) Yes (b) No
7. Do you live in the school district in which you teach? (a) Yes (b) No
8. In what type of district do you teach? (a) Urban (b) Suburban (c) Rural
9. What grade levels do you primarily teach? (a) preK-5 (b) 6-8 (c) 9-12
10. From what type institution did you earn your undergraduate degree? (a) Public (b) Private (c) Parochial
11. To what number of professional organizations do you belong? (a) 1-2 (b) 3-4 (c) 5-6 (d) 7-8 (e) 9+
12. What is your highest degree? (a) Bachelor (b) Master (c) Doctorate
13. What is your ethnic or racial stock? (a) Caucasian (b) Hispanic (c) African-Amer. (d) Other
14. What is your religious preference? (a) Protestant (b)Catholic (c) Jewish (d) Other (e)None
15. Are you eligible to vote in the 1996 Texas school board election in your district? (a) Yes (b) No
16. Did you vote in the 1995-1996 local school board election? (a) Yes (b) No
17. How would you describe your political activity pertaining to the 1995-1996 school board election in your district? (a) Inactive (b) Active (c) Highly Involved
18. If you voted in the November 1992 general election, how did you vote for national and state candidates? (a) Straight Democrat (b) Straight Republican (c) Split Ticket (d) Other (e) Did Not Vote
19. How did you vote in the 1994 governor's race? (a) Bush (b) Richards (c) Other (d) No Vote
20. Was the TSTA endorsement a significant factor in your voting decision in the 1994 gubernatioral election? (a) Yes (b) No
21. How would you describe your political activity pertaining to the candidacy of national and state figures in 1996? (a) Inactive (b) Active (c) Highly Involved
22. Do you know either your state Senator or Representative personally? (a) Yes (b) No
23. How do you identify with the political parties of America? (a) Democrat (b) Republican (c) Other
24. How would you classify yourself politically? (a) Conservative (b) Middle of Road (c) Liberal
25. Have you ever served as a delegate to a political convention? (a) Yes (b) No
26. Have you ever contributed money to a political candidate? (a) Yes (b) No
27. Have you ever run for political office? (a) Yes (b) No
28. Have you ever been elected to political office? (a) Yes (b) No
29. Do you normally vote in the primaries? (a) Yes (b) No
30. Did you contribute to a political campaign in 1996? (a) Yes (b) No
31. Did you work as a volunteer in a political campaign in 1996? (a) Yes (b) No
32. If you were a campaign volunteer, where did you work? (a) Phone bank (b) Mailings (c) Signs/Posters (d) Other (e) Did not work
33. Will you volunteer to work in a political campaign in 1996? (a) Yes (b) No
34. Was the candidate's position on education issues a significant factor in your decision for whom to vote in the 1996 election? (a) Yes (b) No
35. Have you contacted your state Senator or Representative about an education issue in the last two years? (a) Yes (b) No
36. Did your local TSTA association endorse a candidate in the last school board election? (a) Yes (b) No
37. Did you vote for a TSTA endorsed candidate? (a) Yes (b) No
38. Did you contribute to the TSTA-PAC in 1995-1996? (a) Yes (b) No
39. Do you speak a second language? (a) Yes (b) No
40. Should Texas have minimum regulations for home schools? (a) Yes (b) No
41. Should principals be given merit pay based on student performance? (a) Yes (b) No
42. Should teachers be evaluated on student academic performance? (a) Yes (b) No

43. How satisfied are you with your current health insurance coverage?..... (a) Very satisfied (b)Satisfied (c) Dissatisfied (d) Very dissatisfied

44. Would you be willing to pay $186 per month (the cost of the state employee coverage) minus the amount that your district is currently paying toward insurance for coverage comparable to the state employees plan?..... (a) Yes (b) No

45. How much per month would you be willing to pay for improved health insurance coverage?..... (a) (b) (c) (d)

46. If finances are tight and TSTA can only get the legislature to fund an increase in the state minimum salary schedule or provide assistance toward the cost of health insurance, which would you prefer the legislature funded?..... (a) Increase state minimum salary (b) Fund improved health insurance